

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE TEXTUAL HISTORY OF THE
MEDIEVAL LATIN REDACTIONS OF THE *VISIO PAULI*

by

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DECLARATION

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Mary Dwyer
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ABSTRACT

No major review of the textual history and development of the main group of medieval Latin abbreviated versions, or redactions, of the *Visio Pauli* has been published since Theodore Silverstein's fundamental studies in 1935 and 1959. However, twenty-eight further witnesses of this group have come to notice since then, but have not been studied in detail.

This thesis examines each of the new texts in the context of the redaction to which they belong or are related, and their implications for the filiation established by Silverstein. In the case of Redaction IV this has required the classification of all the witnesses of that redaction for the first time, and in the case of the composite redactions drawn from several individual redactions, this has enabled a more precise identification of their components. In the case of Redaction IX one of the new texts supplies the section presently missing from the published edition.

A separate volume of Appendices contains transcriptions from the mss. of the texts examined in the thesis, together with other reference material.

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INTRODUCTION

For its longevity and the vast geographical and linguistic breadth of its diffusion, the *Visio Pauli* or Apocalypse of Paul was an extraordinary text. It was one of the early Christian apocrypha and belongs to the more ancient tradition of Apocalypses and Otherworld journeys.¹ Abundant evidence remains - and continues to emerge - that it was known, cited and copied for well over 1,000 years from its composition in the mid 3rd century, having spread into an area ranging from Egypt, where it was written, to Scandinavia and Russia in the north and from Ireland to Armenia in the west and east, either in the original Greek or translated, in full or abbreviated versions, into Latin, Coptic, Syriac, Arabic, the Slavic languages including Old Russian, Armenian² and nearly all the vernacular languages of the regions of its diffusion over time.³

The earlier versions of the Apocalypse purported to be the Apostle's own words (although the account later changed to a third person narrative) which described first the complaints made by creation - the sun, the moon & stars, the earth and all the waters- against the iniquity of man and God's patient rejection of their plea to unleash their apocalyptic power in retribution; this was followed by an account of how the angels reported daily on the deeds of men. An angel then took Paul on a journey to the Otherworld during which he witnessed the going-out from the body of good and wicked souls at death and how they were met and escorted by holy and evil angels to judgement before the throne of God. He then visited the realms assigned to the righteous and unrighteous after death and, in supplication with the angels and the suffering souls, he obtained from Christ some respite for these souls from their pain; his journey concluded with a second visit to Paradise. A preface describing the miraculous discovery of this work in Tarsus was added at the beginning of the 5th century and over its long history the text was both abbreviated and

¹ See e.g. Yabro Collins 1979, pp. 61-69 & 85-86, and Collins 1979, pp. 6-9 & 12-15; cf. also Attridge 1979, pp. 159-168.

² For the texts in the foregoing languages see Silverstein & Hilhorst 1997, pp. 47-58 and Piovanelli 1993, pp. 26-37

³ These include English, French, German, Italian, Provençal, Danish, Welsh etc.; see e.g. Silverstein 1935, p. 16 and notes on pp. 99-101. For a chronological survey of the spread of the Latin abbreviated forms and the vernacular versions see Dinzelbacher 1991, pp. 167-171.